

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
EB-08 OMB-01 AID-05 IGA-02 MC-02 ACDA-07 COME-00
TRSE-00 /081 W

-----270057Z 003570 /63

R 261237Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GE/J-3/J-4/7

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1904

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINS MASS LE US
SUBJ: LEBANESE EMBASSY REQUEST FOR FMS EQUIPMENT

REF: STATE 081973

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT SARKIS' NEW ARMY COMMANDER SHOWS SOME PROMISE OF REBUILDING THE LEBANESE ARMY. HE HAS DEFINITE PLANS WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO MANY POPULAR CONCEPTS. HE MAY ASK FOR A MODEST INITIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. THE LAF STAFF IS ANXIOUS TO RECEIVE THE OPEN FMS CASES, AND ESPECIALLY THE COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT CONTAINED IN FMS UIE, BUT THEY APPARENTLY ARE NOT AWARE OF RECENT REQUESTS. RESUMPTION OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE (SA) PROGRAM TO LEBANON MAY HAVE POSITIVE RESULTS. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT SARKIS HAS SHOWN THAT HE IS DETERMINED TO MOVE FORWARD WITH HIS PROGRAMS TO REBUILD LEBANON'S SECURITY FORCES. HE HAS PLACED HIS OWN MEN IN CONTROL OF THE POLICE, PUBLIC SECURITY AND THE ARMY. HIS ARMY COMMANDER'S INITIAL PROGRAM FOR THE ARMY ENTAILS BUILDING A COHESIVE HEADQUARTERS STAFF, UTILIZING A BLUE RIBBON MILITARY PANEL TO RECOMMEND
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STEPS TO BE TAKEN AND PREPARING A SMALL FORCE IN THE BEKAA FOR DEPLOYMENT WHERE NEEDED.

3. CG KHOURY APPEARS TO BE WORKING IN THE "SARKIS STYLE" BY CAUTIOUSLY AND METHODICALLY LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR ANY ACTION PRIOR TO ITS ENACTMENT. HE HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE DEFENSE

MINISTER AS WELL AS THE SYRIAN MILITARY/POLITICAL LEADERS.

4. IN INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DATT, CG KHOURY HAS DETAILED HIS PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY FOR REBUILDING THE ARMY AS ONE OF "CLEANING HOUSE" OF THE OLD SOLDIERS, REPLACING THEM WITH YOUNG, INTELLIGENT, DEDICATED MEN, AND PERFORMING WITHIN THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE. HE KNOWS THERE ARE MANY POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LOYALTIES REPRESENTED IN HIS PRESENT FORCE AND THAT HE MUST WEED OUT THE EXTREMISTS IN ORDER TO BUILD A COHESIVE ARMY AROUND A NEW NUCLEUS. HE MAY USE THE VANGUARDS IN THE BEKAA INITIALLY AS A CADRE, BUT HE IS NOT GOING TO RETAIN THEM AS THE FINAL CORE OF THE NEW ARMY. HE HAS ADVOCATED THE EARLY RETIREMENT LAW, A LOWERING OF THE MANDATORY RANK/AGE LIMITS AND OTHER ADMIN MEASURES TO REDUCE THE USUALLY INERT SENIOR OFFICER AND NCO POPULATION. HE PLANS TO REBUILD THE ARMY SLOWLY DESPITE RECENT PRESS REPORTS BY POLITICIANS TO THE CONTRARY. HE WILL APPOINT REGIONAL COMMANDS AND INITIALLY ONLY FORM ONE OR TWO BATTALIONS OF 500-600 MEN EACH. (WHEN QUERIED ABOUT RECENT PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSION OF AN ARMY OF 50,000 MEN HE ONLY SMILED AND SHOOK HIS HEAD IN DISBELIEF.) THE INITIAL UNITS WILL BE "GOLD-PLATED" PROTOTYPES OF HANDPICKED OFFICERS AND MEN. HE IS NOT SURE HOW LONG THIS WILL TAKE AND HE IS NOT IN A HURRY. HE FEELS "TIME IS ON OUR SIDE." WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE IMMINENT DEPLOYMENT OF A FORCE TO THE SOUTH, HE WAS SKEPTICAL OF ANY REAL CHANCE OF SUCCESS
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FOR THE DEPLOYED FORCE BECAUSE OF POLITICAL, MILITARY AND RELIGIOUS PRESSURES ON THE SOLDIERS. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS COORDINATING THE PREPARATION OF A 1,000-MAN FORCE FROM THE VANGUARDS TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF A DETERMINED EFFORT TO PREPARE A FORCE FOR DEPLOYMENT TO SOUTH LEBANON.

5. LEBANESE HQ, AND ESPECIALLY COMMUNICATION OFFICERS, HAVE SAID IN PAST DISCUSSIONS THAT THEY ARE ANXIOUS TO OBTAIN THE RADIO EQUIPMENT IN FMS CASE UIE IN ORDER TO REPLACE WAR LOSSES AND REPAIR DAMAGED RADIOS. IN ITSELF THIS PARTICULAR FMS CASE COULD PROVIDE A TANGIBLE U.S. RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE. AGREE THAT CASE UIE REQUEST SHOULD BE CHECKED PRIOR WITH BRIG VICTOR KHOURY AS HIS STAFF HAS MADE NO MENTION OF ANY RECENT REQUEST TO OUR DATT AND THE FORMER LEBANESE MILITARY ATTACHE MAY BE ACTING INDEPENDENTLY.

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 1904

6. ON APR 19, CG KHOURY DISCUSSED FOLLOWING POINTS
WITH DATT WHICH GIVE USEFUL INSIGHT TO HIS CONCEPT OF
POSSIBLE U.S. AID.

A. A MODEST SA PROGRAM TO EQUIP ONE OR POSSIBLE
TWO BATTALIONS IS INITIALLY ENVISIONED. HE WILL
REQUEST ONLY THAT WHICH IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL AND
THAT EQUIPMENT WHICH HE CANNOT PROVIDE FROM INTERNAL
ASSETS. HE IS CONDUCTING STUDIES NOW TO DETERMINE
INITIAL REQUIREMENTS.

B. KHOURY PROMISED TOTAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ANY
U.S. EQUIPMENT PROVIDED. HE SAID HE WOULD ASSURE THAT
NEITHER THE CHRISTIANS, MOSLEMS, PLO OR SYRIANS WOULD
GET ANY U.S.-PROVIDED EQUIPMENT FROM HIS ARMY.

C. A U.S.-SPONSORED TRAINING PROGRAM WOULD BE
ESSENTIAL TO HIS BUILDING THE MORALE AND
PROFESSIONALISM AS WELL AS WEANING JUNIOR OFFICERS
AWAY FROM THEIR POLITICAL BENEFACTORS. FROM PERSONAL
EXPERIENCE HE SAW U.S. TRAINING AS PROVIDING A FUTURE
CADRE OF OFFICERS WITH PRO-WESTERN ORIENTATION AND
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GENERALLY MODERATE VIEWPOINTS.

D. HE HOPED THAT HE COULD RECEIVE U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO PREVENT THE FIVE PERCENTERS, LEBANESE ARMS ENTREPRENEURS AND POLITICIANS FROM RECREATING THE PRE-WAR HODGE-PODGE OF EQUIPMENT. HE DID NOT PARTICULARLY WANT SOVIET EQUIPMENT BECAUSE OF THE ATTENDANT PROBLEMS OF SOVIET INSTRUCTORS AND LOGISTICS AND THE PROBABILITY THAT, IF IT WOULD BE PROVIDED BY AN ARAB COUNTRY, IT WOULD BE DELIVERED WORN OUT AND WITHOUT SPARE PARTS.

7. COMMENT: PREVIOUSLY, SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO LEBANON WERE SUSPENDED UNTIL THERE WAS AN ACCEPTABLE RESOLUTION OF THE INTERNAL STRIFE AND A RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENTAL MECHANISM COULD BE IDENTIFIED. WHILE IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT PRESENT INTERNAL STRIFE IS COMPLETELY ELIMINATED, IT IS AT A TOLERABLE LEVEL. ALSO, THERE IS AN EMERGING MECHANISM TO REQUEST OFFICIALLY AND RECEIVE MILITARY AID. THIS EMBASSY HAS ALWAYS CONSIDERED THAT PRIOR TO ANY U.S. ASSISTANCE BEING GIVEN, THE LAF MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT ITS REBUILDING PLAN AND FORCE OBJECTIVES ARE PRACTICAL AND OBTAINABLE. ALSO THERE MUST BE A DEMONSTRATED WILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TO STRENGTHEN ITS INTERNAL DEFENSE. CG KHOURY APPEARS TO BE A PRACTICAL SOLDIER AND IN THE LATTER CASE, PRESIDENT SARKIS' DESIRE TO IMPROVE LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY IS A MATTER OF RECORD. THE DORMANT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND LEBANESE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT COULD BE REOPENED BY THE PROVISION OF THE OPEN FMS CASES SUCH AS UIE AND MAINTAINED BY A MODEST SA PROGRAM. THE SA PROGRAM WOULD PROVIDE EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE TO THE RESTORATION OF CENTRAL AUTHORITY. WE SHOULD BE IN A POSITION TO RESPOND RAPIDLY AND POSITIVELY TO REQUESTS THAT WILL
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CONTRIBUTE TO THE REBUILDING OF THE LAF.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2699091
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE EMBASSY REQUEST FOR FMS EQUIPMENT
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, MASS, LE, US
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/911a969f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009